3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

At Work and Play

Making an excellent bow string was a task for a specialist. The bow string was made of the sinew of the buffalo bull or deer, derived from the tendon which lies along either side of the spine from the shoulder blades to the hip bones. The tendon was shredded or subdivided longitudinally into fine threads of fiber. It has been estimated that each sinew had then ten times the strength of ordinary cotton thread of equal size. These sinews or threads were next soaked in glue water, and, while damp, several were twisted to form a strong, perfectly round cord of the same size and tension from end to end, and the ends knotted. Post Oak Jim said that he preferred bow strings made of horse-tail hair because "they didn't break and were not spoiled by moisture." Still, he thought bear gut was the best material of all.[8]

Arrows, next to the bow, were the most precious possessions of a Comanche. Much time was devoted to searching for arrows that had been shot. They were too hard to obtain and cost too much effort to be wasted. This was also true of points lost from the arrow shafts. Nevertheless, it is asserted on good authority that Comanches would never retrieve an arrow which had taken a human life, enemy or friend.[9] Great skill, patience, and judgment were required to make a perfect arrow. The old men who made the best arrows were highly respected for their special skill. Although there was a great difference in arrows, the proportions between the shaft, head, and feathers were quite definite. If these proportions were maintained, the arrow performed efficient and effective work in the hands of an expert bowman; otherwise, it was a failure. An arrow too light in the shaft would not fly steadily; one too heavy would not carry its force long enough. When a good, well-balanced arrow struck the mark, the feather end tilted upward. "The Cheyennes, Pawnees, and Pueblos don't know

[8] This description of bow-making is compiled from statements by informants Kills Something and Post Oak Jim; also, R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 348–49; Carter, *On the Border with MacKenzie*, 295–96; Fannie M. Hughs, *Legends of Texas Rivers*, 219; Marcy, *Adventure on Red River*, 160; Anon., "Indian Bow and Arrow," *Frontier Times*, Vol. VIII (December, 1930), 141; Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 94; Gregg, *op. cit.*, 412; Wissler, *North American Indians of the Plains*, 25–27; Grinnell, *The Cheyenne Indians*, I, 174; Garretson, *op. cit.*, 178–79; Babb, *op. cit.*, 134; also, oral communication of others to Wallace.

[9] Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 46.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

camp functioning properly. The tasks were varied and time-consuming, and no one woman could have taken care of all of them.

The warrior-husband was the killer of game, the procurer of buffalo meat, the Comanches' principal source of food. He had to have two sets of trained horses—one trained for war, the other for the killing of buffalo. In either pursuit, his life was largely dependent on the horse. He manufactured both his riding gear and his weapons, and he trained his own horses. His fighting was practically on a twelve-month basis, since, though the Comanches did not like winter fighting, most of the ambitious warriors made raiding expeditions into Old Mexico when the group went into winter camp.

The husband, therefore, could be of little or no help around the camp, and the labor had to be divided among the women. Usually one of the women was an expert horsewoman and had the responsibility of her husband's horse herd, which often numbered a hundred or more. When the fall hunt was on for the winter's supply of meat, the wives did the skinning and butchering. They dried the meat and made the pemmican. Also, they prepared and tanned the hides. After the tanning came the making of clothing. This included everything the family wore, both in summer and winter. Since there was neither needle nor thread, the holes in the leather were made with a stone awl or one made from bone, and sinew taken from along the backbone of a buffalo or deer was used for thread.

Other hides were converted into robes for bedding or into covers for the tepees. When camp was moved, tepees had to be taken down and fastened on travoises, like all the other camp gear, and then camp must be set up again at the new location. All of this was strictly woman's work.

Somewhere, sometime, during breathing spells from all these duties, the women bore babies, nursed them, and raised them to be good Comanches. And all this was in a society without a recognized medium of exchange, in which no one could hire anything done. The Comanches did, however, utilize slave labor. Successful warriors furnished captive women to their wives for helpers. These captive women were given the opportunity to trade their slave status for wifehood, and captive girls were carefully trained to become Comanche wives. Captive boys were trained as warriors to fill the vacancies in the warrior ranks. In addition to members of other tribes, Anglos, Spaniards, and Mexicans were abducted to be made slaves.

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
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a wife, the other three having died from overwork. Neither would he tolerate a slave woman to help his wife.

According to Comanche custom, if you buy a wife and if for any reason she is unsatisfactory, if she runs away, or if she dies, you may go to the wife's father and demand the purchase price back, or another wife if there is still an unmarried daughter.

Concerning Mo-cho-rook's cruelty, it was said that he never took a prisoner. He killed all, as he came to them: warriors, women, old men, children, babies; and he took no prisoners. My memory is too faulty to give the number of scalps he was supposed to still have. One thing seemed pretty authentic. He was supposed to have a full-length lariat (approximately thirty-three feet) that he had plaited from women's hair—Mexican, Indian, and white.

I was never able to learn whether plaiting was an American Indian-developed art, or if it was learned from the Spanish. Many of the old fellows plaited excellent round rawhide ropes, and also many of them were quite proud of their horsehair lariats. Mo-cho-rook was the one and only man who was supposed to have one plaited from women's hair.

His death on October 4, 1915, at the age of eighty-nine, was slightly on the prosaic side. At least he died in bed. But he saw fit to lend a dramatic touch. He had sustained a broken hip while working with his horses. They brought a doctor out from Lawton, when he refused to go to the Indian hospital. The doctor put him in a cast, but when the doctor came back in a few days, he found that the old chap had made his wife cut the cast off. She had brought him dogwood switches from the creek, and he had plaited himself a wicker cast to hold his leg and hip. He lived only a short time.

As to his age, here is all we have to go by. The Comanche roll was made up soon after the surrender in 1875. At that time he was arbitrarily given the birth year of 1828. That means that they judged him to be fifty years old. It is extremely unlikely that even then any of the warriors who were on the raid when he was kidnapped from Mexico were alive. A little arithmetic will show that they would have been at least seventy years old. That is just older than Indians became at that time, under the conditions they lived in.

Another bit of arithmetic brings some interesting conclusions. Supposing that Mo-Cho-rook's birth year is approximately correct, that means he would have been an active warrior by the year 1844. That

ently the body cavities of these small animals were stuffed with grass before they were tied to the shield. The shield is 59 cm. in diameter and 5 to 6 mm. thick at the edge. Its front surface is further decorated with a painted reddish-brown stripe about 2.5 cm. wide, flanked with white stripes, two small green circles (one above and one below the stripe), and two U-shaped designs in green. The narrow loops of rawhide which pass through the shield surface provide an attachment at the back of the shield for a carrying strap of horsehide 7.5 cm. wide.

This shield is provided with a loosely fitted cover of soft skin, 60 cm. in diameter, which is held in place by a buckskin drawstring that gathers the outer edge of the cover at the back of the shield when pulled tight and tied. This cover is painted in a geometric design composed of a thick black border and an eight-pointed motive outlined in black and filled in with yellow paint (see Figure 20). The latter may be a conventionalized sun symbol.

A second shield base is but 31 cm. in diameter and 4 to 6 mm. thick at the edge. Only its cover is decorated (see Figure 21). A black line encircles the circumference of the cover; black and red concentric circles are painted at the center, and a hoofed mammal with horns—a buffalo or deer?—is painted in black. The tail of a cow, with the hair left on, is tied to the center of the cover as a pendant.[5]

The most elaborately decorated of the three shields is shown in Figures 22 and 23. Its cover (Figure 23) is 53.5 cm. in diameter and bears a conventionalized painting of a bear in black (12 cm. long), a black circle filled with black dots at the center, a black stripe below this, and two black dots to the left of the center. Four small feathers are also tied to the center of the cover. The base of this shield (Figure 22) is 50 cm. in diameter and 5 to 6 mm. thick at the edge. A border of red trade cloth 7 cm. wide is tied at intervals to the outer edge of the shield base. To the inner edge of this cloth are tied 73 pelican feathers as pendants. The trade cloth is decorated with a rectangle of blue pony beads about 7 by 6.5 cm. in size.

The base of this shield (with trade cloth and feather border removed to reveal the shield painting completely) is pictured in color on Plate 18. The large, horned figure in the center may represent either a buffalo or a man (much simplified and conventionalized) wearing a horned headdress. The two monochrome human figures, flanking the central figure, one black and one yellow, are rendered in the same style. Both have featureless rings for heads; short, solid necks; solid, roughly rectangular bodies; and linear ex-

5. This specimen was cat. no. 1470 in the Smithsonian collections but was transferred to the Field Museum, Chicago, in 1901 and is preserved in that museum as cat. no. 62579. Donald Collier, Chief Curator, Department of Anthropology, Field Museum, has kindly supplied photographs and measurements of this specimen.

A [See Plate 17, p. 180-A—Analyst.]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 177]

34: Ewers E-4 (no date) 1969 N06 Comanche N06
Texas

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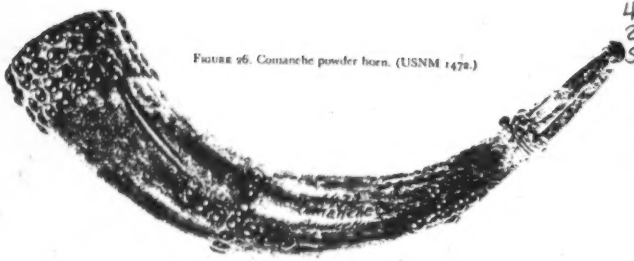

FIGURE 96. Comanche powder horn. (USNM 1472.)

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FIGURE 97. Comanche war whistle. (USNM 5964.)

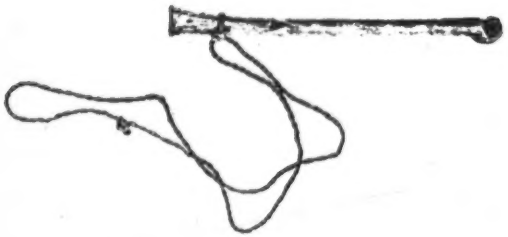

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FIGURE 98. Karankawa war club. (USNM 5458.)

[p. 175]

 profusely with brass tacks in four bands near the base end, and two crosses spaced at equal distances of the length of the horn.

Comanche War Whistle Figure 27

Berlandier mentions the Comanche war leader's use of a whistle to blow commands to his followers while in action against the enemy.[10] One of these whistles, collected by Berlandier, is pictured in Figure 27. It is made from the ulna of an eagle and is 19.5 cm. in length. Open at both ends and with a triangular finger stop cut in one side, the whistle is provided with a cord of twisted rawhide for suspension from the leader's neck. While among the Comanche in 1883, shortly after the intertribal wars ended, Ten Kate was told of the former use of an eagle bone whistle to sound signals in battle.[11] George Bird Grinnell describes the Cheyenne use of a bone war whistle.[12] This was not an instrument peculiar to the Comanche.

Karankawa War Club Figure 28

A war club of the Karankawa Indians of the Gulf Coast is made from a single piece of ironwood (Ostrya sp.). The burl forms a head 10 cm. in diameter, and the projecting branch provides a handle 36 cm. in length. Although this club weighs but one pound, ironwood is an exceptionally hard and strong material. This must have made an effective weapon in close combat. The Indian who made this weapon must have shown considerable ingenuity in recognizing the potentiality of this abnormal tree growth as a war club. It is improbable that ironwood burls were typical Karankawa weapons, because they were uncommon in nature.

This club was obtained by John Varden, proprietor of the Washington Museum in the District of Columbia, while he was in New Orleans on a collecting trip in 1838. He recorded the specimen as a "War club of the Crank-a-War Indians of Texas" from a "George W. Chambers." Although Berlandier did not collect this piece, it is contemporaneous with the specimens in his collection. It may be the only war club that has been preserved from the Karankawa, whom Berlandier met in 1829, less than three decades before that tribe became extinct.

Comanche Painted Rawhide Case Plate 18

Women were the painters of geometric designs on parfleches and other rawhide cases among the Plains Indians. A fine example of Comanche women's painting on rawhide appears in Plate 18. This case is made from a single piece of rawhide folded twice to form the front, back, and triangular top flap of the case. When folded the case is nearly square—26 cm. high by 28 cm. wide. The case is laced tightly together at the sides with long narrow strips of rawhide, which also provide decorative fringes, some as long as 48 cm. This form of case was well known among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes of the Upper Missouri as early as the 1830s and was used to hold sacred objects. The painted designs in green, red, and black on the front of

10. Page 71.
11. Ten Kate, 1885, p. 7.
12. Grinnell, 1962, vol. 1, p. 204.

[See p. 180-B--Analyst.]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 178]

178 this Comanche case resemble, however, the geometric painted designs of the Cheyenne more closely than those of the Upper Missouri tribes.[13]

Comanche Beaded Pouch Plate 19

Berlandier termed a beaded pouch of unusual shape in his collection a Comanche "game bag." It appears as Plate 19A. William Bollaert, however, pictured a pouch of nearly identical size and shape among the articles taken from the Comanche who attacked Corpus Christi in June 1844. (See Figure 18, upper left.)B Perhaps this pouch served for holding medicines or valuable war equipment. The soft skin pouch is 29 cm. wide at the top, and each of the two finger-like projections provides a pocket 25 cm. deep. A series of buckskin tiestrings serves both to hold together the front and back pieces of skin forming the pouch and to provide a decorative fringe. Virtually the entire front of the case is decorated with beadwork in the large or "pony bead" size. The border and two equal-armed crosses are in white, the background in blue beads. The edge of the top flap is decorated with fringe. The beads on this flap are applied in the lazy stitch in three bands: the lower and upper bands are of white and blue "pony beads" while the center band is of the much smaller "sead beads" in white and red.

We know that Spanish officials presented beads to the Indians of Texas during the 18th century and that Dr. Sibley reported Comanche fondness for blue beads in 1807, but this may be one of the earliest examples of Comanche beadwork that has been preserved.[14]

Feathered Headdress Figure 29

A very handsome headdress of a Comanche man is pictured in Figure 29. In form and construction it differs markedly from the more familiar feathered bonnet with beaded browband worn by the Comanche and Indians of many other tribes on dress occasions within the Reservation Period—the headdress that has become the widely recognized symbol of the North American Indian.

This headdress has two major parts, a cap and a trailer of feathers. The cap is fashioned of two pieces of soft-dressed skin of equal size, one forming each side, sewn together with sinew along the vertical midline of the back. It is made to cover the sides, back, and top of the wearer's head but does not extend as far forward as his brow. The lower borders extend to points at the front of each side. The upper part of the cap is covered with red trade cloth, and this, in turn, is decorated with a band of beadwork passing over the top

13. Wissler (1910, pp. 77–78) pictures a side-fringed rawhide case from the Blackfoot and mentions similar cases from the Sarsi, Gros Ventres, Arapaho, and tribes of the Northwestern Plateau in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History.

14. On May 20, 1770, De Mézières requested "two arrobas of beads, white, blue and red" for presents to the chiefs of the Comanche and neighboring tribes, and in 1779 listed 54 pounds of glass beads received for the same purpose. (Bolton, 1914, vol. 2, pp. 201–02, 244.) Dr. Sibley found that the Comanche in 1807 were indifferent to many articles of trade desired by other tribes: "Blue & Red Stroud, Vermilion, Blankets, Blue Beads & knives, are almost the only Articles they Seem Anxious to obtain." (Sibley, 1922, p. 81.)

A [See p. 180-C--Analyst.]
B [See p. 169--Analyst.]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 180]

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

N C 386 824

Their brown color is made from the inner bark, roots and nuts of the walnut and of other trees, much in the same manner as our farmer's wives now dye their wool for home-made jeans.

N C 283 386

After the dyeing is finished, the wool is dried in the shade, and when well dried, exposed to the sun for a few hours; the dyeing is then complete, and the wool ready for spinning, except sometimes, perhaps, not always, they oil the wool slightly, and diffuse the dampness through it by rubbing and rolling it in the hands. I do not know the precise object of this, but they say it works better. This does not impair the color, for washing restores them to their first brightness. It seems to be the peculiar quality of the *set* that gives the lasting brilliancy of the color. I have seen the Camanche blankets, after being used for months, and abused by being put under the saddle, saturated with sweat, rained upon, slept in upon the naked earth, and when carefully washed, present the colors again, as bright as newly dyed silk.

N C 283

The spinning is what you would call twisting the thread; this is done altogether by the fingers, and somewhat similar to the ancient distaff, though reversing the order of operation. The distaff was used to wrap the raw material upon, and the spool or quill was used not only to wind the thread upon, but as the spindle to twist it. The Camanches reverse this order, and use the raw material for the spindle, and the spool only to wind the thread upon. They use no distaff.

A CAMANCHE SPINNING.

C [291]

In spinning, a small portion of wool only is used at a time — a mess, say, of a quarter pound weight, and shaped like an egg, say four or five inches long, and two or three in diameter, is wrapped around with a string sufficiently tight to keep it together, but loose enough at the point to permit the wool to be drawn out for spinning the thread — a small stone, of an ounce or so in weight, is tied on the middle of a stick of about six inches in length

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

(see *d*), and inserted in the lower part of the bunch. This is to add weight to it without increasing the size, and is used as dead weight, to increase and continue the velocity when twirled round by the fingers.

The spinning is begun by first twisting a thread of five or six inches in length, which is wound around a stick of ten or so inches long, and half an inch in diameter, which is held in the left hand, and serves for the spool to wind the thread upon. After the thread is commenced, the spinning proper begins, and is then continued, by constantly keeping the bunch of wool swiftly rotating horizontally, by twirling it with the thumb and middle fingers; at the moment the twirl is given, a slight jerk downwards is made, to draw out the wool, and a simultaneous slight yielding of the left hand, to prevent the thread separating from the mass until the twist is given it, and when sufficiently spun, is wound upon the spool. They usually spin three or four or six inches at a time — and wind up every time. The thread is usually twisted hard, and always doubled before weaving. I have seen thread spun altogether by the fingers, and the spinning and weaving is by no means confined to the women; men are often engaged in it, and exhibit much taste and skill in devising the patterns, as well as blending the colors. After small parcels of the wool are well loosened by picking and straightening with the fingers, it is tied loosely together with a string, to prevent the bunch falling apart; or it is often put in a small bag, of four or six inches in diameter, and drawn together at the mouth, leaving portions of the wool protruding from it in a point, to facilitate its being drawn out to form the thread. A weight of an ounce or two — usually a flat stone, is tied in the middle of a stick of six inches in length, and half an inch in diameter, and is enclosed within the wool, or the bag, near the bottom of it, and acts as a dead weight to facilitate the momentum when turning round. The ends of the stick project from the mass of wool like two handles, and are used to twirl it with the fingers.

The thread is usually about the fineness of our good Osnaburg, and spun sufficiently hard to twist readily when doubled, and

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

makes the doubled thread not very hard. After the spinning is finished, and previous to weaving, the thread is measured, by *hanking* it over two pins a certain distance apart. This is only to ascertain the length of the thread required, and is then formed into a ball.

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NAVAJOES SPINNING.

The Navajoes have another and a more artistic manner of spinning, for which it has been thought they were indebted to white instructors, but which they indignantly deny. Two boards, of two or three feet in length, and three to six inches in width, as may be procured, are pinned on opposite sides of the crotch of a tree of convenient height, or of two posts set in the ground near each other, or two trees growing near together. Two holes are bored in the boards, one opposite the other, and about one and a half inches in diameter. A limb of any kind of tree with a branch diverging at right angles, is procured. The larger limb is cut off about eighteen inches each way from the branch, so as

167: Peters T-5 (1843) 1877 NT13 Navaho NT13
Comanche NO6

N 283 401 to be about three feet long. The branch is trimmed off to fit the holes, and constitutes the spindle. The limb is used as the handle, and as a fly to continue the momentum. The whole apparatus is unique, simple and efficient, and I would say an original one. (See section *S*, where *a*, *a*, is the spindle, *b*, *b*, the boards, and *c*, a pin to keep the spindle in its place.)

The spinning is commenced like the first process, by twisting with the fingers a short thread, then fastening it to the point of the spindle. The spinner has already prepared, by picking with her fingers, a quantity of wool which she has in her basket or bag, tied around her waist, or in a bundle like the one described in the previous process. A person twirls around the handle or fly (see *d*), and the spinner keeps moving backwards, as the thread is formed. The process is much the same as that by which our rope makers spin hemp by hand. A thread of six or eight feet in length, is spun before being wound up.

C N 283 The Indian never spins until he or she has a specific work to perform. The size, plan, configuration, and every other requisite, is first determined. The quantity of thread required for any piece of work, is from long habit, pretty accurately known. I think I have said already, that all their weaving is done with a double and twisted thread. They waste no thread. They usually spin a small quantity and weave, and then spin again, and so on, until the work is completed. The process is the same for cotton, wool, grass, etc.

C N 286 Weaving is the most elaborate of their arts, and they make beautiful work. Their blankets, or I should call them shawls, are often rich, strong and showy. Some have a resemblance to the Persian shawl. They frequently sell in Mexico for three hundred dollars, and I have seen them sell in New Orleans for two hundred dollars. I have one in my possession, taken by Gen. Houston at the battle of San Jacinto, which cost three hundred dollars. They are usually impervious to water, very heavy, and are rather plaited together than woven. The time occupied in making one of these, is from four to six, and sometimes eight months.

[pp 361 - end not processed]